

## **2008 FIRE AND LIFE SAFETY EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR**

### **The Award**

The Fire and Life Safety Educator of the Year Award honors an individual or a team for their involvement and commitment to making our world safer from fire and other preventable injuries. It seeks to recognize those who have exhibited excellence in educating their community members about fire and life safety, and have demonstrated outstanding leadership, teamwork, creativity and perseverance. Anyone who works to educate the residents of Massachusetts about fire and life safety can be nominated and anyone can make a nomination. Nominees may be a member of any profession. They may impact the safety of any one part or many parts of the community — children, older adults, teens, special groups of citizens, immigrants, refugees or the general public.

### **The Nominees**

#### **Deputy Chief Charlie Doody, Canton Fire Department**

Charlie Doody has trained all the staff and faculty of St. John the Evangelist School in CPR, AED use and First Aid. He has educated the administration on all matters relating to the safety of the school, and oversaw the updating of school safety equipment including new fire doors and a new alarm system. Charlie is also the school's liaison with the Canton Fire Department. He is on the both the town and the school emergency management teams. Charlie puts the education of the community as a priority.

#### **Mr. David Moura, Teacher, Dighton Regional High School**

Dave Moura is a social studies teacher at Dighton-Rehoboth Regional High School. Following a training to improve the school's lock-down procedures he brought together a representative from each of the two police departments in the regional district and in conjunction with them developed a two-hour information and training session for the teachers in the high school. He followed this up with four 45-minute class meetings with the students. The subsequent drill was very successful and thereafter Dave surveyed participants and looked at the data for the continued improvement of the process. Dave is a logical, methodical and consistent professional.

#### **FF/EMTP Edward Gavin Jr. & FF/EMTP Ryan Herrick, Halifax Fire Department**

Edward Gavin and Ryan Herrick as new hires to the Halifax Fire Department with no experience in teaching or public speaking and with no prior knowledge of the S.A.F.E. Program organized, developed and enthusiastically delivered the S.A.F.E. Program in Halifax. They restored the program and also created new partnerships with the schools, TRIAD, the Plymouth County Sheriff's Department, Council on Aging, police department and local merchants. In addition to working with the schools, they have participated in many town events such as the Annual Safety Day, Annual Open House, Health Fair, and programs with the TRIAD and the Council on Aging.

#### **FF Oona Aldrich, Harvard Fire Department**

Oona Aldrich has led the Harvard Fire Department S.A.F.E. Program for many years. Her drive, enthusiasm and commitment to Public Fire and Life Safety Education

are outstanding. She has developed a team of equally enthusiastic instructors who work to educate the children and citizens of Harvard. This is particularly remarkable as it is an all-volunteer department. The props that Oona uses are very creative and her tobacco program is extremely well received. She has been a presenter at the Massachusetts Fire and Life Safety Education conference numerous times and is now also an instructor at the MA Firefighting Academy. She is also known for her excellent instruction on using the Hazard House. Oona has been awarded the statewide Firemark Award by the Liberty Mutual Insurance Company.

**FF Maria Pelchar, Holyoke Fire Department**

Maria Pelchar has been a Holyoke firefighter since 2002. She came to Massachusetts with her family when she was sixteen years old and entered Holyoke H.S. without the ability to speak English. Her father was a firefighter in their home country of Guatemala and he inspired Maria to attain her goal of joining the Holyoke Fire Department. Maria has created a program from “cradle to grave” involving every sector of the population. She is currently developing classes for children with autism. Maria has the unique ability to motivate and involve other firefighters to work with her. She took an older shelved puppet show program and reinvented a dynamic bi-lingual (English and Spanish) show for kids and adults. Maria has developed extensive partnerships with many social service agencies, schools and the community college among others. She has been an ambassador to the Spanish speaking community building relationships that did not exist before her involvement. Recently Maria facilitated the “Play Safe, Be Safe” conference at Holyoke Community College.

**FF Michael McLeieer, Merrimac Fire Department**

Michael McLeieer has been the Merrimac S.A.F.E. Educator for the past 8 years. During that time the program has increased from a one-hour assembly once a year to a weeklong program during Fire Prevention Week and a weeklong ice survival program in the winter. There have been three Young Heroes in Merrimac, one in 2004 and two in 2007. Through his non-profit organization called E.S.C.A.P.E, Michael also teaches First Aid and CPR classes for daycare providers and other interested people in Merrimac and Battle Creek Michigan. He educates pre-schoolers three times a year in both places as well. His creative program includes the use of a service dog named Jake who demonstrates “Crawl low under smoke”, “Get out and stay out” and “Stop, drop and roll”.

**Assistant Chief George L. Robichaud, Monson Fire Department**

George Robichaud has been the lead S.A.F.E. Instructor in Monson for over 40 years. Since 1986, the Monson Juvenile Fire-setters Intervention Program has educated over 200 children who were involved with inappropriate use of fire. George has mentored many members of the fire department to encourage them to educate residents about fire safety and preventable injuries. George worked with a local bank who donated funds to provide glow sticks for seniors in the town to use in case of a power failure and a local grocery store that helped with a fundraiser that purchased a “Sparky” costume that is used at parades and fairs. He also ensures that smoke alarms and CO detectors are provided to anyone in need. There have been three Young Heroes from Monson. Despite the length

of his years of involvement in the program and despite the many fluctuations in the funding, George has not “burned out” or become discouraged and he continues to be dedicated to the success of the S.A.F.E. program.

**FF Tim Kelly, Princeton Fire Department**

Tim Kelly has been active in working with the Thomas Prince School in Princeton since 1999. He provides the students, staff and parents with fire and life safety education on a yearly basis, including CPR, first aid, fire safety and smoking prevention. Tim recently partnered with Oona Aldrich from Harvard to teach middle school students about the dangers of smoking. The program was very well received by this not easy to teach age group. Tim writes the S.A.F.E. grant, works with the principal to schedule the classes, and recruits and organizes other S.A.F.E. instructors who are volunteer firefighters. Tim and some of his recruits have used their personal vacation time to teach the program. When funds were cut, the S.A.F.E. instructors continued to volunteer their time and Tim reached out for donations from the town and the Princeton Firefighters’ Association to assist in keeping the program going. As evidence of his success, there have been three S.A.F.E. Heroes in Princeton since 2002.

**Mr. Michael Swain, University of Massachusetts-Amherst**

Fire Prevention Officer Michael Swain is in charge of campus fire safety at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. Mike has recognized that the college-aged student has often been forgotten when it comes to fire safety messages. He has been aggressive in not only providing valuable, pertinent information to the students at UMass but through his work with the non-profit Center for Campus Fire Safety, he has promoted the need for fire safety education to students, parents, leaders of colleges and universities nationwide as well as to legislators in Washington, DC. He has provided fire safety education to Congress’ pages and interns as well as training for many of the nation’s campus fire safety professionals. Mike works tirelessly to get fire safety messages to every student on campus. Under Mike’s leadership, the Greek Fire Safety Academy has developed a number of programs for the students living in fraternities and sororities, which are off-campus housing. The program includes practicing a fire escape through theatrical smoke, fire extinguisher training, and discussion about their lifestyles, personal behavior and responsibilities to other residents and guests, and a mock dorm room that demonstrates how fast fire spreads. He also utilizes peer-to-peer education through student fire fighters. Mike has built bridges between the University, its students, the fire department, student firefighters, and the local community’s emergency response agency.

**FF Matthew Bruso, Williamsburg Fire Department**

Matt Bruso has served as the school Fire Safety Officer for the Williamsburg schools for over five years and has numerous qualities that make him a natural educator. He works with children in the classroom, trains teachers, brings fire trucks to schools and works with the schools practicing their fire drills. He has excellent teaching/facilitation skills and a comfort with children that make his work look easy. His patience, application of a new safety curriculum and clarity of goals and expectations are commendable. He is a flexible, caring, kind, patient, professional who utilizes parents, specialists and technology to create an effective learning environment.